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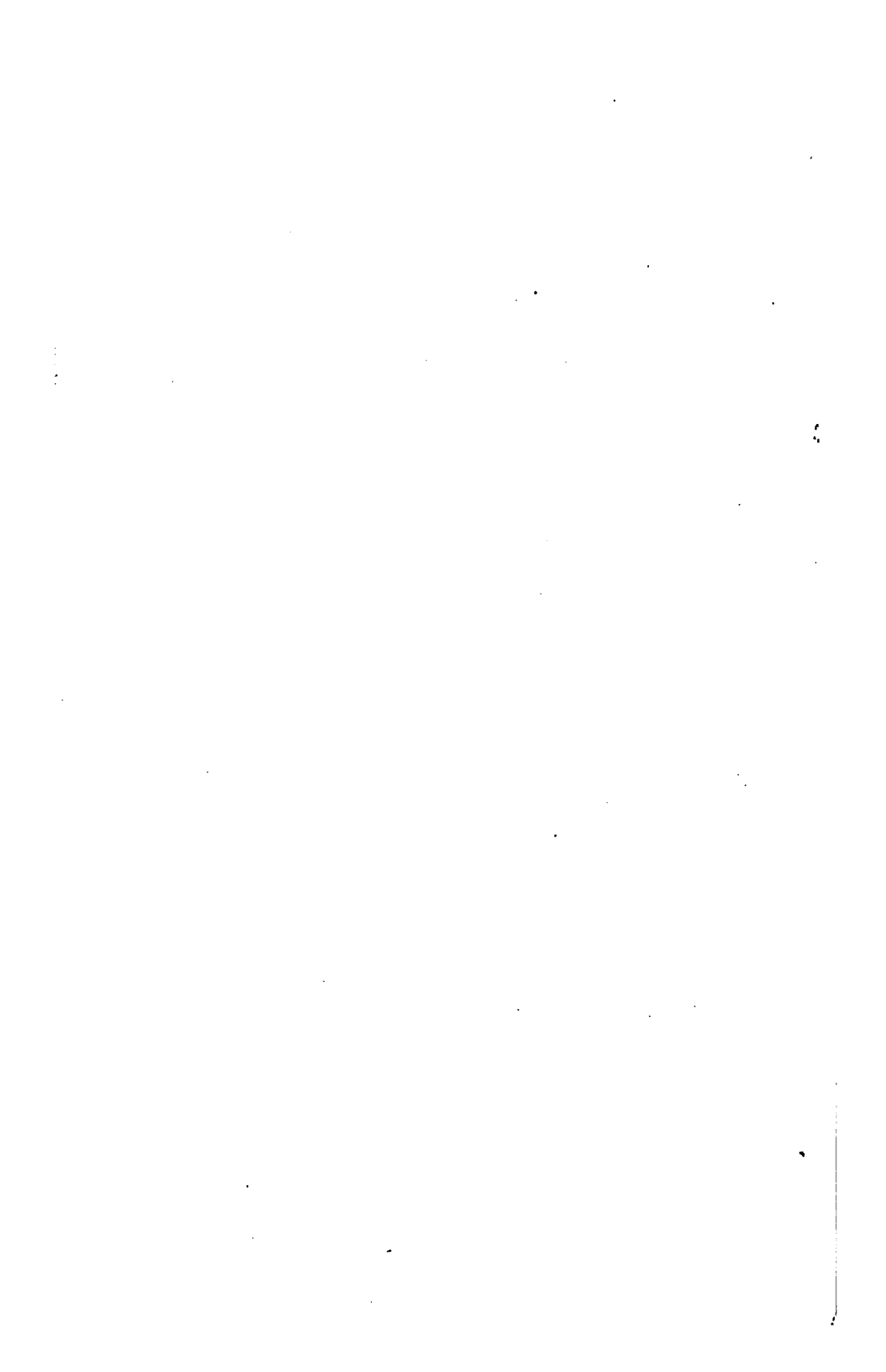
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From Dr. J. A. Green
Nov. 96

REVIEW

71820

OF

TICKNOR'S HISTORY OF SPANISH LITERATURE.

Esq. S. Holland

[From the Christian Examiner for January, 1850.]

CAMBRIDGE:
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1850.

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REVIEW.

History of Spanish Literature. By GEORGE TICKNOR.
New York: Harper & Brothers. 1849. 3 vols. 8vo.
pp. 568, 552, 549.

THERE are two points of view from which every book may be observed; one from without and the other from within. In the former case, it is compared with other books upon the same subject, or exposed to the test of an ideal standard. The critic ventures to assert whether a better book might not have been written with the materials at command, whether all the sources of information have been examined, whether the ground has been gone over superficially or thoroughly, and whether a spirit of accuracy presides over the minor details of names and dates. A judgment of this sort supposes in the critic a knowledge of the subject equal at least to that of the author whom he is reviewing.

But, on the other hand, every book furnishes to some extent the means of forming an estimate of its merits. Every book is a work of art, and of books of history and science we have a right to inquire both as to their substantial and their formal claims. A man of taste may know nothing of Sanscrit, and yet, if he read a treatise on Sanscrit literature, he will be able to say whether the style be good, and the general treatment of the subject judicious. Turner's *History of England* is very elaborate and learned; Hume's, on the contrary, is rather superficial. Yet, with the most moderate knowledge of English history, a reader is competent to decide that Hume is greatly the superior in the sagacity of his observations, in the philosophical tone of his understanding, and in the easy grace of his style. Robertson's *Charles the*

Fifth is not esteemed by those who are learned in the subject to be a very profound or a very accurate work. Few men are able to give an opinion on this point, but every scholar may venture to say that the author has treated the subject with great judgment, and commended it by a style of sustained and elaborate polish.

We think it no more than fair to our readers to state at the outset, that, in summoning Mr. Ticknor's book before our literary tribunal, we mean to try it upon the evidence which its own pages furnish. Our acquaintance with Spanish literature is far too slight to attempt any thing more. Indeed, we do not know the man on this side of the water who is competent to examine this work from a point of knowledge on a level with that which the author has reached. Mr. Ticknor's residence in Spain, his personal relations with many of its most distinguished scholars, the studious years he has devoted to the subject, and the command of an unrivalled Spanish library, give to his opinions and statements upon Spanish literature an authority which the most confident critic will hardly venture to resist. We aim at nothing higher than to give what shall strictly be a review of the work, to tell our readers what the author has aimed to accomplish, and with what success his efforts have been crowned, and to venture a modest judgment as to its literary merits of style, method, and arrangement. We feel the burden of our incompetence the less, because the work is not addressed to those who are learned or even curious in Spanish literature, but to all classes of intelligent and cultivated men. The author's purpose has been to present the literature of Spain as the true exponent of its civilization and the manners of its people, and to infuse into it that animating life-blood which flows from the great national heart of the country. Thus, while he has never lost sight of the cardinal points of accuracy and thoroughness, he has aimed to produce a book which shall be something more than a work for reference and consultation, — which shall be found in the drawing-room as well as in the study, — which shall be read by all who have a taste for literary history, or an enlightened curiosity as to the causes which have raised Spain so high and brought her so low.

In his arduous enterprise of writing the history of

Spanish literature, Mr. Ticknor has had no pioneer in English literature. This is rather a remarkable fact, as the Spanish peninsula has always been a favorite ground with the writers of England and of our own country. From his early travels in Spain, the vivid mind of Southey derived influences and impressions which tinged his whole literary life. Lockhart's versions of the Spanish ballads will preserve his name longer than any of his original works. The laurels of Prescott have been gathered on the soil of Spain and that of her colonies. In the same romantic land, Irving found the materials for his most elaborate historical work, and some of the most charming of his fictions. To these names may be added those of Robertson, Watson, Lord Holland, Napier, Lord Mahon, and Ford, as proofs of the interest which Spain has always awakened among the men of letters of England. But no one has yet written a history of Spanish literature in the English language. Nor, indeed, is any such work to be found in the Spanish language itself. That country has never been wanting in patient and laborious scholars, who have accumulated ample materials for literary history, and written with learning and ability upon particular authors and detached portions; but no one has arisen among them who has traced the growth of that rich and picturesque literature from its remote origin, through its splendid and vigorous prime, down to its mournful decay and decrepitude. The reader of Mr. Ticknor's volumes will be able to judge how far this may be owing to the fact, that, before the age of literary retrospection was reached in Spain, the spirit of the people had so withered away in the cold shade of the throne and the Inquisition, that men of letters had lost their heart, cheered neither by the genial patronage of the crown nor the animating voice of public opinion. It is thus rather a curious circumstance, that nine English readers out of ten get all their knowledge of Spanish literature from two writers who were neither Englishmen nor Spaniards. We need hardly say that we refer to Bouterwek and Sismondi.

Bouterwek, a name never to be mentioned without respect, was one of those laborious and conscientious German scholars who begin to write books before they are out of their teens, who labor in their literary vocation

with the patient industry of a mechanic toiling at his daily trade, and die at last with a proof-sheet in their hands. His *History of Spanish Literature* forms a part — a single volume only — of an elaborate work on the entire history of elegant literature in modern times, which appeared in twelve volumes, published at various periods between 1801 and 1819. The portion devoted to Spanish literature is very well done, characterized by just general views and a healthy tone of criticism, but is imperfect in many particulars, not only because a subject so extensive rendered it impossible to treat any part of it with any thing like minuteness, but also because in this particular department the author was embarrassed by the want of access to a complete Spanish library, which compelled him in many instances to rely upon extracts and second-hand opinions. In 1823 it appeared, together with its author's brief *History of Portuguese Literature*, in an English translation, made with taste and skill, by Miss Thomasina Ross.

We will not so far disparage our readers as to presume that they require to be told who and what Sismondi was. His lectures on the literature of the South of Europe, comprising an account of the Provençal and Portuguese, as well as the Spanish and Italian, — a work which would have exhausted the literary enterprise of many authors, but served only as an agreeable interruption to the severe historical researches of this eminent writer, — were delivered at Geneva in 1811, and published at Paris in 1813. The whole work has secured to itself a permanent place in European literature, and will always be read with interest, from the beauty of its style, the tasteful tone of its criticism, and the generous humanity of its sentiments; but in whatever relates to Spain, Sismondi was even less provided with original authors than Bouterwek, and he was consequently under obligations to his predecessor, which, though they are generously acknowledged, lessen the authority of his own labors. The whole work was translated into English, with notes, by Thomas Roscoe, and published in 1823.

Mr. Ticknor has been fortunate in the selection of a subject as yet unattempted by any writer in our own language, and in another respect he has also been fortunate. The literature of Spain presents a rich and fruitful theme

to a writer who looks upon literature as the expression of national feeling, and treats it in the spirit of a philosopher, and not of a bookworm. Perhaps no nation in Europe has so distinct and individual a character as the Spanish, and in no other is the literature more strongly marked by the national peculiarities. Its power and its weakness, its beauties and its defects, are alike drawn from the soil in which it grew. The Spanish character was formed in a period of struggle and contest with a race alien in blood and in religion, which lasted from the overthrow of the Gothic monarchy, in the eighth century, down to the capture of Granada, in the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. When, after the memorable defeat of Roderick in 711, the remnants of the nation, stripped of every thing but faith and hope, retreated behind the mountain fastnesses of the Asturias, leaving nearly all the Peninsula in possession of the Moorish invaders, every thing seemed to portend the extinction of the Gothic race and the Christian religion. But under the stern nurture of adversity, a new class of virtues was called into being, — hardihood, enterprise, indomitable courage, and inflexible perseverance. In the unequal struggle which commenced, the Spaniards, though often baffled, were always successful. Slowly, inch by inch, the land was wrested from the grasp of the Moorish invader. What was won by fiery valor was defended with wakeful obstinacy. The Moors were gradually driven into narrower circles, till in the fifteenth century they ceased to exist as a separate people.

In this protracted struggle, continuing for more than seven centuries, the Spanish people were supported by an exalted sense of patriotism and devotion, which under ordinary circumstances would have been extravagant and fanatical. Every Spaniard lived and acted as if specially dedicated to the service of his God and his country. No motives less powerful, no pressure less strong, would have sustained the people in the arduous task which Providence had assigned to them. Under these influences there were developed in the Spanish character a fiery courage, an heroic constancy of purpose, and a fervor of religious faith, which made the nation for a long time the dominant power in Europe, which reared an empire upon which the sun never set, which inspired the romantic en-

terprises of Cortés and Pizarro, and chained victory to the car of the Great Captain.

But from the same fountain flowed both sweet and bitter waters. Few nations have paused for any length of time at that point in their progress in which the vertical sun of power and prosperity casts no shadow. That inevitable law of the natural body, by which the principle of decay begins its corroding work so soon as the full maturity of development has been reached, prevails also in political societies. The generous loyalty of Spain, which had led to such efforts and such sacrifices, degenerated into a blind and weak submission to the encroaching spirit of the crown, fatal to independence, to self-respect, and to all the manly virtues. The devotional feeling, which breathes in strains of such celestial purity through the poetry of Manrique and Luis de Leon, which upon a thousand fields of battle kindled the eye of the dying soldier with rapturous gleams of triumphant faith, and brought all the glories of heaven before his swimming gaze, became a fierce fanaticism, which made war alike upon true religion and constitutional liberty, converting the strong into rebels and the weak into hypocrites. The glory of Spain seemed at its height during the reign of Charles the Fifth; yet even at that time the throne and the Inquisition had begun to cast those poisonous shadows under which all the vital virtues of the country gradually withered away, until the Spanish monarchy became aptly typified by its own Escorial, a gloomy structure, half palace and half monastery, frowning over a desolate waste.

To these influences, which had so important a share in forming the Spanish character, must be added the effect of a tropical climate, with its alternations of passion and languor, and the Oriental element derived from the long residence of the Moors in the Peninsula, who, for a considerable period at least, were superior to their Christian rivals in cultivation and social refinement. The result of all this was a certain intensity of feeling, ever tending to the extremes of fanaticism and extravagance, and seldom checked by a keen sense of the ludicrous. The virtues of the Spaniard were always fluttering upon the verge of exaggeration, and breaking out in fantastic and absurd forms. In his true type, for example, he is honorably

distinguished by gravity, dignity, and self-reliance; but these are precisely the qualities most likely to be carried to excess. Thus, the common caricatures of the Spaniard in every literature are founded upon the exaggeration of these virtues, and the ludicrous contrasts to which they give birth. Beggarly claims are attended with regal pretensions. The hungry pauper, who is always chasing the phantom of a dinner, has sounding titles and an interminable pedigree. Every ragged hidalgo is as good a gentleman as the king, only not so rich. This element of disproportion lies at the bottom of most of the humorous literature of Spain, which delights in the grotesque contrasts which are produced by bringing beggars, gypsies, and rogues into the society of reputable and distinguished men and women. We notice the same peculiarity in the language itself, which is rich, sonorous, and expressive,* admirably suited for great occasions and elevated sentiments,—the appropriate dialect of kings and ambassadors,—but does not always adapt itself with ease and flexibility to the common purposes of every-day life, and too readily swells into bombast.

The literature of Spain reflects, as in a mirror, all these peculiarities of the national character. Her strength and her weakness, her glory and her shame, are here revealed in bright lights and deep shadows. In no other literature does patriotism breathe more animating strains, or devotion soar upon a more seraphic wing. All the heroic and elevated virtues find here a fitting expression, and he who would learn the language in which deep feeling, romantic generosity, chivalrous valor, and lofty self-reliance speak, need not go beyond the Peninsula. But here, too, we mark the same tendency to the overstrained and the extravagant. We find more of all good things than of good taste and good judgment. We meet with exaggerated expressions of loyalty, which outrage all propriety and probability, and seem worthy only of madmen or fools. The moral sense is shocked by the union of devotional fervor with the most vicious propensities, and Christianity is disfigured and degraded by being associ-

* We were present at the annual performances of the College of the Propaganda in Rome, two years since, where exercises in some sixty languages were spoken. Of all these, the Spanish was the finest in the mere quality of sound.

ated with ferocious passions and a profligate life. The strong, unquestioning faith of the people sometimes tempts their authors into an exhibition of spiritual subjects, which to Protestant reserve seems coarse and irrelevant.

Especially are the peculiarities of the Spanish temperament observable in that part of their literature which is inspired by the passion of love. With the Spanish poet, love is a burning and consuming fire, which feeds upon the heart and wastes away the life. A favoring smile lifts him into a heaven of ecstasy, while a frown converts the face of nature into a universal blank. The delicate sentiment which breathes through the sonnets of Petrarch is like the night-breeze that steals the perfume from the orange-gardens of Sorento, but in the poetry of Spain love is a tropical tempest, which makes a desert of the breast in which it rages. And this volcanic passion does not express itself with simplicity and directness, but the lover, in the midst of his alternations of rapture and agony, indulges himself in the most cold and fantastic conceits, and moralizes the perfections of his mistress into a thousand elaborate similes, which seem equally opposed to good taste and genuine passion.

But from these preliminary observations, which the work we have under consideration has suggested, we feel that it is time for us to pass to the work itself. Mr. Ticknor, in a brief and graceful Preface, which we beg the readers of the work to read with care, and in its natural order, relates the circumstances which first turned his attention to the subject of Spanish literature. Passing several months in the country, early in life, and becoming personally acquainted with some of its most distinguished men of letters, he began to collect Spanish books and to make himself acquainted with their contents. The interest thus awakened was never lost. Fortunate in his opportunities of acquiring books and manuscripts, the materials for his enterprise were constantly increasing. These materials were early thrown into shape by the preparation of the course of lectures which were delivered by him, as Professor of French and Spanish Literature in Harvard University; and the result of his labors, at the end of thirty years, is seen in a library of Spanish books which has no equal out of Spain, and perhaps no supe-

rior in it, and in these volumes on Spanish literature, which, it is but moderate praise to say, are far superior to any thing that has gone before them in wideness of range, depth of learning, and thoroughness of research, and quite absolve the coming world from the duty of writing another work on the same subject.

Mr. Ticknor divides the literature of Spain into three periods, corresponding very nearly to its growth, maturity, and decay. The first period extends from the first appearance of the present written language to the early part of the reign of Charles the Fifth, or from the end of the twelfth century to the beginning of the sixteenth. To this first period about four fifths of the first volume are devoted, and this period is arranged into two divisions. "The first will contain" (we are now quoting the author's language) "the genuinely national poetry and prose produced from the earliest times down to the reign of Charles the Fifth; while the second will contain that portion which, by imitating the refinement of Provence or of Italy, was, during the same interval, more or less separated from the popular spirit and genius. Both, when taken together, will fill up the period in which the main elements and characteristics of Spanish literature were developed, such as they have existed down to our own age."

The long procession of Spanish literature opens with the grand and shadowy form of the *Cid*, floating between the daylight of history and the twilight of romance to such a degree, that some writers have questioned his actual existence. But there is no more reason to doubt that there was such a personage as the *Cid*, than to doubt that there was such a man as Daniel Boone, because many things that are told of him are pure fictions and because many exploits performed by others are ascribed to him. The Canon in *Don Quixote* speaks truly when he says, (we are indebted to Mr. Ticknor for the quotation,) — "There is no doubt there was such a man as the *Cid*, and such a man as Bernardo del Carpio, but much doubt whether they achieved what is imputed to them."

The most interesting record of his life and deeds, and one of the most interesting of all literary monuments, is the Poem of the *Cid*, which consists of above three thousand lines, in a sort of rude Alexandrine measure, and

can hardly have been composed later than the year 1200. In simplicity, animation, and occasional picturesqueness, it will remind the classical reader of the poetry of Homer. Like Homer, too, the writer indulges himself in homely details and minute particulars, which give it value as a record of the times of which it treats. Indeed, no work is more full of the spirit of the age of chivalry,—not of that fantastic and ideal age which modern discontent dreams of, and which never had any real existence,—but as it actually was, a period of rude virtues, rough manners, strong arms, and plain speech. The following are Mr. Ticknor's closing observations upon this poem:—

“It is throughout striking and original. It is, too, no less national, Christian, and loyal. It breathes everywhere the true Castilian spirit, such as the old chronicles represent it amidst the achievements and disasters of the Moorish wars; and has very few traces of an Arabic influence in its language, and none at all in its imagery or fancies. The whole of it, therefore, deserves to be read, and to be read in the original; for it is there only that we can obtain the fresh impressions it is fitted to give us of the rude but heroic period it represents: of the simplicity of the governments, and the loyalty and true-heartedness of the people; of the wide force of a primitive religious enthusiasm; of the picturesque state of manners and daily life in an age of trouble and confusion; and of the bold outlines of the national genius, which are often struck out where we should least think to find them. It is, indeed, a work which, as we read it, stirs us with the spirit of the times it describes; and as we lay it down and recollect the intellectual condition of Europe when it was written, and for a long period before, it seems certain, that, during the thousand years which elapsed from the time of the decay of Greek and Roman culture, down to the appearance of the ‘*Divina Commedia*,’ no poetry was produced so original in its tone, or so full of natural feeling, picturesqueness, and energy.” — Vol. I. pp. 22, 23.

Portions of this poem have been translated into English, with infinite spirit and grace, by Mr. John Hookham Frere, one of the most accomplished scholars of our times. From this poem, from the *Chronicle of the Cid*, a later composition in prose, and from the numerous ballads on the subject of his life and adventures, Southey has compiled his entertaining *Chronicle of the Cid*, a skilful piece of literary restoration, in which, if old materials are not always used, the substitutes are nearly as good as old. Mr. Frere's translations will be found appended to this

work, of which a handsome edition was published in 1846 by Mr. Daniel Bixby, of Lowell, which would have been still better if the proof-reader had taken rather more pains in the Spanish quotations. The publication of such a book, in such a town as Lowell, is a significant and suggestive fact, which might lead a sensible and thoughtful Spaniard into a train of reflections flowing more in shadow than in sun.

To this first period belong the ballads of Spain, so well known to all who know any thing of the literature of the country. Upon their origin, much curious research has been expended; some writers tracing them to primitive models in the Latin language, and others deriving them from the narrative and lyric poetry of the Arabs. But such discussions, of which the well-known controversy upon the origin of modern romantic fiction is an instance in point, resemble the quarrel between the two knights as to the shield that was gold on one side and silver on the other, except that in these literary tilts the shield has sometimes more than two sides. But as every form of literary production must somewhere be native and spontaneous, why look abroad for influences which the inquirer will find lying at his feet? The ballad poetry of Spain was eminently the indigenous growth of the soil, and a moment's reflection will show that the circumstances of the country were highly favorable to this class of compositions. The English scholar need not be told of the number of ballads in his own language which are founded upon the border warfare between England and Scotland, in the romantic incidents to which it gave rise, and the unsettled state of society of which it was at once the cause and the effect. But for many centuries the Spanish people were engaged in a somewhat similar contest, in which their courage was sustained and their enthusiasm heightened, not only by patriotic, but by devotional feeling, for the Moors were not only foreigners, but infidels. As a ballad in its primitive form is merely a versified narrative of a particular occurrence, the varied incidents of so protracted a contest would afford numberless themes for such poems. A brilliant foray, a skirmish in the mountains, the capture of a castle, the death of a knight, the abduction of a maiden, would readily be cast into the form of rude verse by the

wandering minstrel, and sung from village to village till it was woven indissolubly into the memories of the people. Add to this a metrical structure of extreme simplicity, the liberty of using imperfect rhymes, and the effect of a luxurious climate, quickening the sensibility to all lyrical impressions, and the abundant growth of the Spanish ballads will be easily explained, without resorting to any foreign influences. Such poems, indeed, are like the natural wild-flowers of a country, which rise from no exotic seed, but are the growth of the spontaneous productiveness of the soil. They spring up along the way-side of human life. Rooted in the human heart, the air and sunshine of every day call them into bloom. They owe their birth to that universal law of Providence by which the blood is stirred by the breath of song, and the soul melted by the poet's touch.

The ballads of Spain began to be collected and published in the beginning of the sixteenth century, but many of them were composed at a far earlier period, and some are doubtless coeval with the first formation of the language. The task of arranging them in a chronological order has never been attempted, and could not be with success. As to their literary merits there may be a diversity of opinion. Southey has pronounced them inferior to those of England, a judgment to which no patriotic Spaniard will assent, and which we are not quite sure would be confirmed by an intelligent German or Frenchman. But it will be admitted by every candid mind, that they show a more refined state of society, and a higher, or, at least, gentler tone of moral feeling. The heroic ballads of Spain are of no inconsiderable value in an historical point of view. They reveal to us the character of the noblemen and gentlemen of Spain, as it was before the touch of tyranny had paralyzed the national heart, and before the Inquisition had mixed the poisonous breath of suspicion and distrust with the very air of the fireside,—brave, generous, devout, and loyal,—a vigorous shaft of manly virtues crowned with a Corinthian capital of chivalrous courtesy and romantic gallantry. No wonder that these ballads are still heard all over the Peninsula,—that the Spanish maiden sings them at her household labors, and the muleteer carols them as he drives afield over the sunny plains of Andalusia. They

bring back the old glories of Spain, and show what she still would be if her rulers had always been faithful to their trusts. Music and song have ever soothed the sorrowing heart of the exile, and with the lot of the true-hearted Spaniard is mingled a portion of the exile's bitterness,—the mournful comparison of the past with the present. If Spain is ever to rise from her fallen and degraded state, to put on "beauty for ashes," it will be mainly owing to the spirit which these ballads have had no small share in awakening and preserving among the common people,—that part of her population which has ever suffered the most and offended the least.

Mr. Ticknor divides these ballads into four classes; such as relate to fictions of chivalry, and especially to Charlemagne and his peers; next, such as regard Spanish history and traditions, with a few relating to classical antiquity; then such as are founded on Moorish adventures; and lastly, such as belong to the private life and manners of the Spaniards themselves. Of these, the second class—the historical ballads—forms the largest and most important division. Their favorite heroes are the Cid and Bernardo del Carpio, and something like a connected biography of each of these personages might be gathered from the ballad poetry alone; not that the historical antiquary would accept the whole as literal truth, nor, on the other hand, would he regard it as pure fiction. No sagacious historian would fail to avail himself of the poetical illustration of Spanish history which these ballads supply. They are full of strong traits of national character, and are true to the manners of the period in which they were written.

The Moorish ballads form a brilliant and attractive class. They are later in their origin than the purely historical ballads, and were, generally speaking, the growth of a period subsequent to the fall of Granada. They show the vivid impressions made upon the susceptible Spaniards by the romantic region of which that event gave them undisturbed possession. They are full of the spirit of Andalusia, its snowy mountains, its sunny plains, its verdurous valleys, the soft beauty of its moonlight nights, and the luxurious refinement of Moorish life and manners. We feel, in reading them, that we are transported into a gentler region than we have hitherto been accustomed to. The



blast of war blows less frequently in our ears. The play of fountains in the courts of the Alhambra, whispers of passion in the orange-gardens of Granada, serenades at midnight with fair forms bending from balconies to listen, the tournament of reeds, and the mournful notes of sorrow when all these had been lost, — such are the elements which charm us in the Moorish ballads, and still throw a light brighter than that of day over the lovely region which the Moor once called his own.

The ballads upon manners and private life form a numerous class, and have that interest which belongs to all poetical expressions of popular feeling. Many of them, as might be expected, are called forth by the fruitful inspiration of love; some are pastoral, and some shrewd and homely, but all are true, and imbued with the flavor of the soil.

Mr. Hallam has remarked that these Spanish ballads are known to the English public, "but generally with inconceivable advantage, by the very fine and animated translations of Mr. Lockhart." With deference to so high an authority, we doubt whether this praise of these translations is not a little extravagant. They are certainly "fine and animated" poems, but they are often paraphrases rather than translations, and the student of the originals will miss some of their peculiar charm of simplicity and directness in these versions, though he will find their places supplied by graceful embellishments, such as modern taste will approve. It would not be doing justice to Mr. Lockhart to say that his translations, as compared with the originals, remind us of Prior's cold and tedious dilution, in his "Henry and Emma," of the sweetness and simplicity of the old ballad of "The Nötbrowne Maide"; but a fair parallel may be found in two well-known passages, one from Shakspeare and one from Gray, cited by Coleridge in illustration of his principles of poetical criticism.

"How like a younker or a prodigal
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay,
Hugged and embraced by the strumpet wind!
How like the prodigal doth she return,
With over-weathered ribs and ragged sails,
Lean, rent, and beggared by the strumpet wind."
Merchant of Venice, Act II. Sc. 6.

“ Fair laughs the morn and soft the zephyr blows,
 While, proudly rising o’er the azure realm,
 In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
 Youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm,
 Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind’s sway,
 That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey.”
Gray’s Bard.

Men of taste may perhaps differ as to the comparative merit of these two passages. He who prefers Gray will also prefer Lockhart’s ballads to the originals.

The portion of Mr. Ticknor’s work which treats of these ballads is entitled to high praise. Its fulness of research and amplitude of bibliographical and historical information will commend it to those who are curious in such matters, while the general reader will be attracted by its genial and judicious tone of criticism, and by the occasional translations, which are alike faithful and spirited.

The prose chronicles of Spain form a most interesting and characteristic part of its literature, unrivalled in variety, richness, and picturesqueness. They extend over a period of two hundred and fifty years, from the time of Alfonso the Wise to the accession of Charles the Fifth. They are subdivided into general chronicles and royal chronicles, prepared by royal hands or under royal authority, and thus clothed with a sort of official weight and dignity; chronicles of particular events; chronicles of particular persons; chronicles of travels; and romantic chronicles; the last comprising only a single specimen, and of no great merit. We can only refer our readers to Mr. Ticknor’s full and luminous pages for far more ample and exact information on these works than can be found in any other writer in our language, and must content ourselves with quoting his just and pertinent concluding reflections.

“ In truth, the chronicles of no other nation can, on such points, be compared to them; not even the Portuguese, which approach the nearest in original and early materials; nor the French, which, in Joinville and Froissart, make the highest claims in another direction. For these old Spanish chronicles, whether they have their foundations in truth or in fable, always strike farther down than those of any other nation into the deep soil of the popular feeling and character. The old Spanish loyalty, the old Spanish religious faith, as both were formed and nourished in the long

periods of national trial and suffering, are constantly coming out; hardly less in Columbus and his followers, or even amidst the atrocities of the conquests in the New World, than in the half-miraculous accounts of the battles of Hazinas and Tolosa, or in the grand and glorious drama of the fall of Granada. Indeed, wherever we go under their leading, whether to the court of Tamerlane, or to that of Saint Ferdinand, we find the heroic elements of the national genius gathered around us; and thus, in this vast, rich mass of chronicles, containing such a body of antiquities, traditions, and fables as has been offered to no other people, we are constantly discovering, not only the materials from which were drawn a multitude of the old Spanish ballads, plays, and romances, but a mine which has been unceasingly wrought by the rest of Europe for similar purposes, and still remains unexhausted." — Vol. i. pp. 215, 216.

Our limits will not permit us to give any analysis of the chapters which Mr. Ticknor devotes to the romances of chivalry, whose names are preserved in the pages of the immortal work which sealed their doom, as monumental tablets transmit records of those to whom they are reared; nor of his curious and learned inquiries into Provençal literature in Spain, and into Catalonian and Valencian poetry. Nor can we do any thing more than make mention of such names as Don Juan Manuel, the author of that curious collection of tales and apologues, the "*Conde Lucanor*,"* and Alphonso the Wise, whose code of laws, "*Las Siete Partidas*," compiled six hundred years ago, is still cited and discussed in the tribunals of one of our own States.

In Spain, as in most other countries of Europe, the drama appeared in its first form in those religious representations, by pantomime and dialogues, by which the clergy sought to teach and enforce the doctrines and mysteries of Christianity. But no fragment of them, and no distinct account of them, now remain to us. Nor is there any thing properly dramatic among the secular poetry of Spain, till the latter part of the fifteenth century. The first composition of a dramatic form was called "*The Couplets of Mingo Revulgo*," a satirical dialogue direct-

* In the "*Conde Lucanor*" appears, for the first time in European literature, the story which forms the plot of the "*Taming of the Shrew*," though Shakspeare found it in some later source. In the same work is the admirable tale of the Magician and the Dean of Santiago, which was translated by Blanco White for the *New Monthly Magazine*.

ed against the unhappy state of affairs in the latter part of the weak reign of Henry the Fourth, and written about 1472. The "*Celestina*," a work of much higher pretensions and much higher character, appeared about the same time. It is a drama, or rather a dramatic poem, extending to the formidable length of twenty-one acts, and on that account alone not capable of being represented. But it exerted a strong influence upon the national drama. We find in it the same elements which we observe in its later and more finished forms; a love-plot interfered with and embarrassed by all sorts of low and vicious characters, a succession of complicated intrigues, with wild and improbable adventures. It is full of spirit and animation, and written in a style of vigorous and idiomatic purity; and on account of these merits it enjoyed an extensive popularity, both at home and abroad, and led to many imitations, in spite of its gross libertinism of thought and language. But the honor of founding the Spanish theatre belongs, so far as it can belong to any one person, to Juan de la Enzina, who lived at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. After him, Gil Vicente, a native of Portugal, wrote plays both in Spanish and Portuguese. The dramatic compositions of Naharro show much talent. But it is not probable that the plays of any of these writers were publicly acted in Spain, and whatever influence they exerted was through the press. The foundation of a popular national drama, which held the mirror up to nature as it was in Spain, was reserved to a later period. To the three last-named writers Mr. Ticknor devotes two chapters, full of curious information gathered from original sources.

Thus far we have spoken of the popular literature of the first period, which was the natural growth of the soil, and original alike in form and in substance. But contemporaneous with this there sprang up another class of writers, whose taste was formed upon Italian models. Many circumstances conspired to make the influence of Italy upon Spain early in time and important in extent. The deep religious faith of the Spaniards made them turn to the Romish See with a peculiar feeling of veneration and trust. The light of intellectual culture, too, in modern times, first dawned upon Italy, and shone with a lus-

tre brightened by the neighbouring darkness. Before the year 1300, Italy possessed five universities, while Spain had not yet one, and numbers of Spanish youth sought in Bologna and Padua the means of a liberal education not yet provided at home. The relative position of the two countries led naturally to commercial intercourse, as soon as men began to exchange the products of one region for those of another. The reader of Spanish history need not be informed of the political relations of the two countries, and how early Spain obtained a foothold in Sicily and Italy, and how the armies of Ferdinand and Louis the Twelfth drenched with mutual slaughter the fair fields of that unhappy country, equally the victim and the sufferer whatever might be the issue of the contest. But, more than all these, the language of Italy, from its resemblance to that of Spain, established an important medium of communication. An educated Spaniard would understand Dante and Petrarch with very little more trouble than it costs us to read the Scotch poems of Burns, or the Canterbury Tales of Chaucer. We need not, therefore, be surprised to mark the influence of Italian literature upon the writers of Spain at an early period.

Of the authors of the courtly or Italian school, one of the most distinguished is the Marquis of Santillana, born at the very close of the fourteenth century; a man of high rank, and, like many of his countrymen, cultivating literature with energy and success through a life crowded with the labors and duties of war and statesmanship. He was a man of learning, a sound and judicious critic, and a poet of no mean order. Of his poetical powers, the finest specimen is a song, "Una Serranilla," or A Little Mountain Song, addressed to a maiden whom he found tending her father's herds upon the hills. The Arcadian reed never breathed a gentler or a softer strain. To fully appreciate its merits, we must imagine the Duke of Wellington writing a song which combines the airy grace of Herrick and the tenderness of Burns. In Bohn's recent edition of Sismondi there is a translation of this little poem by Wiffen, which resembles the original as a handful of raisins resembles a bunch of grapes.

Many other names will be found recorded with due honor in Mr. Ticknor's learned pages, which we cannot

even copy into our own; but we must pause for a moment at that of Jorge Manrique, whose beautiful poem on the death of his father is so well known to readers of English by the exquisite translation of Professor Longfellow. He was one of a family honorably distinguished in war and in literature. His poem, called in the original "Coplas," is one of those effusions of natural feeling, flowing warm from the heart, which will always charm and interest so long as love and sorrow dwell in the breast of man. The tenderness and grief which it breathes are without affectation or extravagance, and its whole tone is elevated by religious faith. Its style and versification are worthy of the truth and beauty of its sentiments. A curious proof of the estimation in which it has always been held is to be found in the fact, that it has been repeatedly published with poetical glosses or commentaries, which are generally little better than feeble dilutions of the original.

The following are Mr. Ticknor's concluding observations on the first period of Spanish literature.

"If, however, before we enter upon this new and more varied period, we cast our eyes back towards the one over which we have just passed, we shall find much that is original and striking, and much that gives promise of further progress and success. It extends through nearly four complete centuries, from the first breathings of the poetical enthusiasm of the mass of the people down to the decay of the courtly literature in the latter part of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella; and it is filled with materials destined, at last, to produce such a school of poetry and elegant prose as, in the sober judgment of the nation itself, still constitutes the proper body of the national literature. The old ballads, the old historical poems, the old chronicles, the old theatre, — all these, if only elements, are yet elements of a vigor and promise not to be mistaken. They constitute a mine of more various wealth than had been offered, under similar circumstances and at so early a period, to any other people. They breathe a more lofty and a more heroic temper. We feel, as we listen to their tones, that we are amidst the stir of extraordinary passions, which give the character an elevation not elsewhere to be found in the same unsettled state of society. We feel, though the grosser elements of life are strong around us, that imagination is yet stronger; imparting to them its manifold hues, and giving them a power and a grace that form a striking contrast with what is wild or rude in their original nature. In short, we feel

that we are called to witness the first efforts of a generous people to emancipate themselves from the cold restraints of a merely material existence, and watch with confidence and sympathy the movement of their secret feelings and prevalent energies, as they are struggling upwards into the poetry of a native and earnest enthusiasm; persuaded that they must, at last, work out for themselves a literature, bold, fervent, and original, marked with the features and impulses of the national character, and able to vindicate for itself a place among the permanent monuments of modern civilization." — Vol. I. pp. 452, 453.

The second period in Spanish literature extends from the accession of the Austrian family to its extinction, or from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth. Its comparative importance may be estimated from the fact, that Mr. Ticknor devotes to it the last hundred pages of the first volume, the whole of the second, and the first two hundred pages of the third, — about one half of the whole work. Within this period Spain reached its highest glory, and before its close the fatal poison of despotism and bigotry had struck to the heart of the people, and dried up the sources alike of vigorous action and original literature.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century there was little of literary productiveness in Spain, and the first impulse to a better state of things came from abroad. The career of conquest run by Charles the Fifth in Italy led to more intimate relations between the two countries than had been before known; and the influence of the great writers of Italy gradually manifested itself in a class of Spanish poets who wrote in the measures, and with the spirit, of Italian verse. This Italian school met with strong opposition, but prevailed in spite of it, and has ever since produced obvious effects upon the literature of Spain. Of the writers of this class, the first in point of time is Juan Boscan, who died about the middle of the sixteenth century. His poems were published, after his death, in four books, of which the second and third, constituting by far the largest part of the volume, are composed of poems entirely in the Italian measure. He was a man of learning and taste, with various accomplishments and highly cultivated powers. His poetry was marked by grace, delicacy, and refinement, rather than by strong original genius; and in point of style he is so

admirable, that some critics have claimed for him the rank of the first classical poet of Spain.

In the innovation which he introduced in Spanish literature, he was powerfully seconded by his friend, — a man of finer genius than himself, — Garcilasso de la Vega. He was of a distinguished family, a soldier by profession, and received a mortal wound in an attempt to scale the walls of a petty fortress in the South of France, in 1536, when only thirty-three years old. But there is nothing in his poetry of the stormy music of the camp. We hear in it only the shepherd's reed and the lover's lute. It is full of sweetness and tenderness, with a shade of gentle melancholy, and a vivid sense of natural beauty. The versification is flowing and harmonious, and the style of faultless purity. His poems have always been the delight of his countrymen, and there has ever been a sort of general consent among their men of letters as to their great excellence, such as has been accorded to no other Spanish poet.

The success of Boscan and Garcilasso in transplanting into their own language the forms and spirit of an exotic literature is highly complimentary to their powers, but had they sought inspiration at native fountains and reproduced in their poems the elements of the true national character, cultivating and developing what was native and indigenous, it can hardly be doubted that their influence would have been more extended, and their fame more widely spread. Their unquestioned genius and pure taste would have commended them none the less to the fastidious and the refined, and they would also have woven their verses into the fibres of the national heart, and thus enjoyed that universal consideration and popularity which are now accorded only to Don Quixote and the best of the ballads.

Another writer, whose influence was mainly extended to the Italian forms introduced by Boscan and Garcilasso, was Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, one of the most extraordinary men to whom Spain has ever given birth, and who might fairly be taken as the type of the genuine Castilian character, in its highest state of energy and power. He was a soldier, a statesman, and a diplomatist, the military governor of Siena, ambassador at Rome, and the representative of his sovereign at the Council of Trent;

in all which capacities, he showed the most chivalrous courage, the most indomitable perseverance, the readiest address, the most skilful resources, and, when the occasion called for it, the most pitiless cruelty. But these active duties did not absorb the fiery and fervid energies which were pressed down and running over in this child of the tropic sun. In the intervals and breathing-spaces of war, politics, and gallantry, — for he made love with that irresistible union of power and passion which the Greek poets ascribe to the father of gods and men, — he acquired, as one plucks flowers on a rapid walk, a large amount of knowledge, and became, not only an accomplished, but even a learned man. He accumulated books and manuscripts with all the zeal of a modern collector and all the advantages of wealth and high position. He wrote a variety of poems, epistles, sonnets, and lyrical pieces, some of which are in Italian measures, and some in the ancient forms of Castilian verse, but all full of glowing life and stamped with the impress of original power. His satires and burlesque pieces, of which he wrote several, have never been printed, and we can only imagine the rich wit and “heart-easing mirth” which a man of such vivacious talent and such experience of life must have put into them.

In the retirement of his old age, he devoted himself to the composition of an historical work on the rebellion of the Moors, in the reign of Philip the Second. It is written in a style of rich and elaborate elegance, founded upon that of Sallust, but occasionally showing the influence of Tacitus, and it has the higher merits of weight of matter and great fairness of statement.

But as an author, Mendoza is best known, and has exerted the most marked influence upon the literature of his country, by a work written in his youth, under the inspiration of those sparkling animal spirits and that rich sense of purely sensational* life, which must have had no small share in carrying a man through so effervescent and

* This is a “vile phrase,” but a convenient one. Every writer must have sometimes felt the want of an expression which shall be the proper correlative of “intellectual,” denoting the just and legitimate functions and satisfactions of the senses; a matter of considerable importance, so long as we have bodies, and quite too much neglected in modern education. “Sensual” has been degraded from its natural and primitive meaning, and denotes only the abuse of the senses.

tumultuous a career. We refer to his "*Lazarillo de Tórmes*," a novel of low life, the first of a class well known in Spanish literature under the name of the *gusto picaresco*, or the style of the rogues, and made famous all over the world in the brilliant imitation of "*Gil Blas*."

The humor of this class of compositions, which is rather grotesque than purely comic, depends upon the principle of contrast, illustrated not only in the efforts of rogues, thieves, and beggars to extract support from the orderly and industrious classes, but also in the discrepancy between the actual condition of reputable persons and that which they are desirous of maintaining in the eyes of others. It cannot be denied that, in the development of this element, we find evidence of that hardness of heart and want of sensibility to human suffering, of which the conduct of Spain towards the Moors, the Jews, and the Mexicans gives such mournful proofs. The pangs of hunger, for instance, are not usually esteemed, by men whose hearts are in the right place, to be a laughter-moving theme, yet a frequent character in these fictions is a well-born and proud gentleman, so miserably poor as to be constantly suffering from want of food. Certainly, such books are not the most profitable reading, but it would be carrying morality to asceticism to say that they are absolutely pernicious. Bad books may be divided into two classes, — those which confound the essential distinctions between right and wrong, and those which inflame the passions by seductive pictures. Byron's "*Don Juan*"* is a good illustration, for it does both, and the mind that could conceive such a work was "set on fire of hell." But these fictions do neither. They introduce us to low company, and make us acquainted with low vices, but they do not make either the company or the vices attractive; and he whose moral perceptions are perverted by such books must be already in so bad a way as not to be worth the saving.

We must pass with a very rapid step over this second

* We remember to have met with and tried to read this poem at an inn in Martigny, in Switzerland, while on a pedestrian excursion through the Oberland, in the summer of 1847, and shall not soon forget the disgust awakened by the contrast between its mocking and licentious tone and the glories and sublimities around us.

period of Spanish literature, or else our article will swell to the dimensions of a volume. We cannot, therefore, give any analysis of Mr. Ticknor's chapter on didactic poetry and prose; nor of that on the chroniclers and historians of the time of Charles the Fifth, among whom is found the honored name of Las Casas. But we must pause for a moment to pay our due tribute to the serene and beautiful genius of Luis Ponce de Leon, the last of that series of distinguished authors, who, during the first half of the sixteenth century, gave a new character to Spanish poetry by productions composed in the spirit of the great writers of Italy or of the ancient classics. He is pronounced by Bouterwek the most correct of all the Spanish poets. His poems are few in number, and form but a small part of his literary labors, but they are of great value, and they are generally placed at the head of all Spanish lyric poetry. He was an ecclesiastic by profession, and in his life and writings the monastic character is presented in its most attractive and ideal form, adorned by gentleness, purity, religious sensibility, and tranquil submission, and crowned by profound learning and the most admirable genius. His favorite studies, like those of Milton, were the ancient classics and the Hebrew Scriptures, and his poems, like those of Milton, vindicate the excellence of these models. They are full of that devotional fervor and intense spiritual aspiration, so common among Catholic writers of the South of Europe, but rare among Protestants, though rudely expressed in some of the Methodist hymns. Indeed, the honest Sismondi frankly confesses that he is unable to appreciate their merits. They breathe that vague longing of the soul to flee away and be at rest, so often awakened in men of religious faith and sensitive temperament by the rude shocks of common life. As the language and versification of his poems are so exquisite as to call forth only unqualified praise from the most competent critics, it is not surprising that they have ever held so high a place in the regards of a devout and enthusiastic people like the Spaniards. One of the best of his poems has been admirably translated by Bryant.

A considerable portion of Mr. Ticknor's second volume is devoted to the popular national drama of Spain, which is traced from its origin under Lope de Rueda, through

the various forms of opposition it encountered, till it became firmly established in general favor at the beginning of the seventeenth century, after which it enjoyed a long period of splendid success. This is the most interesting portion of Spanish literature, because it is the most original. It is formed upon no existing models. It was the direct and immediate growth of the national spirit, and thus reflects most clearly all the features of the national character. In other European nations, the drama is more or less colored by foreign influences; but not in Spain. Here we find no trace of Greece, or Italy, or France, or England. Within the Spanish theatre, the dramatic scholar finds himself in a new world. He must lay aside all recollections of Sophocles, Shakspeare, or Racine. He must forget his choruses, his three unities, and his five acts. Every thing he sees and hears — the forms, the style, the tone of sentiment, the motives of action, the texture of the plot — is strange to him. It is intensely national. Thus the Spanish character and the Spanish drama illustrate each other as Greek art and Greek poetry do; and he who would understand the history of Spain must include in the range of his studies the plays of Lope de Vega and Calderon.

This part of Mr. Ticknor's work has apparently cost him the most labor, and will doubtless be read with the greatest interest. It would be doing him injustice to attempt any such imperfect abstract as our limits would of necessity restrict us to. In point of fulness and variety of information, it is infinitely in advance of any thing which has thus far been accessible to the general reader. His chapter on the old theatres of Spain, the actors, scenery, properties, and general mode of representation, is, especially, full of curious learning, which must have been gathered by bits and fragments, from a great variety of sources, such as only a very complete Spanish library could supply.

The three great writers of Spain, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Calderon, belong to the same period. Indeed, for sixteen years they were all living together. Cervantes died in 1616, when Calderon was sixteen years old and Lope de Vega fifty-four. They also all wrote for the stage, but with very different fortunes. Calderon is exclusively, and Lope de Vega principally, known by

his dramas; but those of Cervantes would hardly have preserved his name, had his claims rested upon them alone.

Cervantes is one of the greatest of writers, and he was also as natural and amiable as he was highly gifted. He appears to have been singularly free from the melancholy and querulousness which so often belong to the temperament of genius; even more so than his illustrious contemporary, Shakspeare, for Cervantes has left no such record of his inner life as Shakspeare's sonnets supply. He was always poor; five years a captive in Algiers; severely wounded and maimed for life while yet very young; once or twice in prison; never blessed with a sense of security and repose; till the last moment, writing for uncertain bread; yet to all this adverse fortune he opposed a front, not merely serene and tranquil, but gay, joyous, and triumphant. His sufferings left no stain of bitterness or defiance upon his mind. His good nature was as invincible as his spirit. His temper was without sediment, and the rough shocks of life could not cloud or sully it. The account of his amazing courage, fortitude, and magnanimity, while a slave in Algiers, moves the deepest springs of sympathy and admiration, but we scarcely venture to compassionate so heroic a soul. We are hardly using extravagant language when we say that the qualities he then and there displayed are nearly as rare as the genius which produced Don Quixote.

Beside this immortal work, Cervantes wrote several plays,—one of which, the *Numantia*, abounds with scenes of terrible power and deep pathos,—and a variety of prose fictions, of remarkable literary merit; but all are thrown into the shade by the splendor of his great romance. Upon this work, the most popular in European literature, which has been translated into all languages and read by every body who has read any thing, any critical remarks of ours would be superfluous and uncalled for. Our mite of praise could add nothing to that universal tribute of admiration which has ever been paid to the felicity of the original conception, the admirable contrasts presented by the two principal characters, the comic power of the incidents, the rich, idiomatic beauty of the style, and the air of good sense and natural cheerfulness which hangs over the whole work, like the sunny atmosphere of the region in which its scenes are laid.

A curious literary discussion has arisen as to the object which Cervantes had in view in writing *Don Quixote*. One theory is thus stated by Mr. Ticknor:—

“His purpose in writing the *Don Quixote* has sometimes been enlarged by the ingenuity of a refined criticism, until it has been made to embrace the whole of the endless contrast between the poetical and the prosaic in our natures,—between heroism and generosity on one side, as if they were mere illusions, and a cold selfishness on the other, as if it were the truth and reality of life.” — Vol. II. p. 104.

This theory, to which Sismondi has given the sanction of his great name, and which he has expounded with much eloquence and ingenuity, is doubtless of German origin. Our Teutonic cousins, if not the inventors, are the great masters of that suggestive school of criticism, which applies to the productions of genius a creative faculty akin to that which gave them birth. ‘This principle leads sometimes to very admirable, and sometimes to very questionable results. Goethe’s observations on *Hamlet*, in his *Wilhelm Meister*, are of the former class. They are equally profound, original, and just. Some of Dr. Ulrici’s explanations of the plays of Shakspeare are an instance of the latter class, in which we do not know which to wonder at most, the absurdity of the views or the solemn air of authority with which they are propounded.

But, as Mr. Ticknor justly observes, this explanation of *Don Quixote* is opposed, not only to Cervantes’s express statement, but alike to his own character and that of the age in which he lived. That was not an introspective period, nor was that the complexion of the mind of Cervantes. No great writer ever had more of that element of unconsciousness, which some contend to be the inviolable accompaniment of genius. His main object in writing the first part of *Don Quixote* was, undoubtedly, to obtain bread for himself and his family, and he was not prepared for the great popularity with which it was received, so much beyond that of his former productions, whose inferiority he himself was not likely to have perceived or acknowledged. But this very success emboldened and encouraged him. His intellectual offspring became dearer to him from the favor which they enjoyed,

and in his second part he often lost sight of his original plan, and wrote from the strong interest he had begun to feel in his subject and in his characters. In the same manner, Spenser in his "Faerie Queen," as he goes on, is constantly forgetting his allegory and becoming absorbed in the adventures originally intended only to illustrate it. And, furthermore, it is true as a general remark, that every work of genius is susceptible of applications of which the author did not dream. A man cannot measure the height and depth of the inspiration which comes from the breath of God. The tones of the singer awaken echoes sweeter than themselves, and from the penetrating wisdom of genius are derived lessons of which the teacher himself was unconscious.

In a similar spirit of criticism, Don Quixote has been pronounced to be the most melancholy book that ever was written, because its whole effect is to discourage generous devotion and heroic self-sacrifice, and to favor a heartless selfishness and indifference to human suffering. Don Quixote, we are told, is a being tender, heroic, and disinterested, actuated by the highest and purest of motives, whom we are compelled to respect, yet who is always making himself ridiculous and never succeeding in any thing he undertakes. But in this statement there is a want of accurate discrimination. It is not true that we always respect Don Quixote. We sympathize in his motives, we admire his sentiments, but his conduct does not, by any means, command our unqualified respect. Indeed, that headlong and fantastic benevolence which discards all considerations of time, place, and circumstance, which rejects the conditions which are essential to success in all human enterprises, is not a quality worthy of respect or imitation, and we know of no law in our moral constitution which forbids the application of a little wholesome ridicule to correct its wild extravagances. It seems to us that this wise and genial book can never leave a melancholy impression, except upon an essentially morbid nature, or one whose crude enthusiasm has not been mellowed by time or lessened by experience.

The name of Lope de Vega is familiar to many who know nothing of his works, from his prodigious fertility of invention and the amazing number of his productions,

in which he surpasses the writers of every age and country. He would have been a voluminous author had he never written a drama, for his miscellaneous works fill twenty-four quarto volumes. Among these are no less than five epic poems (one a burlesque), pastorals, eclogues, romances, sacred poems, sonnets, epistles, and prose novels. None of these have any marked merit. They show scholarship, facility, metrical skill, and poetic feeling, but they want originality and genuine power. They are tame transcripts of exotic forms, and have nothing of that national spirit and indigenous flavor, without which no literary production ever attained extensive popularity or permanent influence. We doubt if any one has read them through for the last hundred years, except to win a wager or perform a penance.

Besides these miscellaneous works, he wrote upwards of two thousand dramas, of which only about three hundred have ever been printed. His facility of composition cannot be fairly comprehended from vague, rhetorical statements, but appears most astonishing when presented in the naked details of arithmetic. "According to his own testimony," says Bouterwek, "he wrote on an average five sheets a day; it has therefore been computed that the number of sheets which he composed during his life must have amounted to one hundred and thirty-three thousand two hundred and twenty-five, and that, allowing for the deduction of a small portion of prose, Lope de Vega must have written upwards of twenty-one million three hundred thousand verses." If this calculation be correct, it would require him to have written from his thirteenth year to the time of his death at the rate of more than nine hundred lines a day, which, when we consider his various active employments and his extensive learning, becomes, as Lord Holland justly observes, almost impossible. But, with all deductions, enough is left to show an activity and fertility of mind which makes the brain of a common man giddy with amazement. Compared with him, the most prolific writers of other countries — Voltaire, Goethe, Scott, Cobbett — seem to have been mere literary idlers, who now and then took up the pen to amuse themselves of a rainy forenoon.

Lope de Vega, born in 1562, began to write for the stage before he was thirty years old, and he continued to

maintain an unbounded influence over it till the time of his death, which took place in 1635, when his dramatic sceptre passed, by natural and undisputed succession, into the hands of Calderon, at that time thirty-five years old. There were many points of resemblance in their career. Both were precocious writers; both enjoyed the favor of the court and of the nation, and were rich and honored; both served as soldiers, and became ecclesiastics; and in both the poetic talent continued to advanced age.

Lope de Vega was really the founder of the proper national drama of Spain, for though others had written plays before him, yet they paled before the splendor of his productions like stars before the sun. He gave the Spanish drama the form and spirit which it maintained so long as it had an existence. He planted it so deeply in the national heart, that no efforts of bigotry and intolerance could uproot it. All its characteristic merits and defects may be studied in his plays. The prodigious influence which he exerted may be estimated from the fact which Mr. Ticknor mentions, that, when he began to write for the stage, he found at Madrid only two companies of strolling players, who acted in court-yards, and that he left there at the time of his death no less than forty companies, comprising nearly a thousand persons.

As we have before said, he who would understand the Spanish drama must approach it without prepossessions or even recollections. As we see it, in its highest forms, in the works of Lope de Vega and Calderon, we mark no division into tragedy and comedy, but tragic and comic elements are so intermingled as to defy all attempts at classification on that basis. The Spanish plays, considered in regard to their subjects, may be ranged under two heads, the religious and the secular. The former class, which are peculiar to Spain and curiously characteristic of the national character, were a peace-offering to the grim genius of the Inquisition. Their subjects are taken from the Scriptures and the Lives of the Saints, and their treatment was such as to seem often scandalous and irreverent to Protestant apprehension, though no such feeling was awakened in the devout Catholics of Spain who listened to them. Allegorical and ideal beings are also introduced, in a manner

that appears very absurd to our cold Northern temperaments.

If we give to the drama its primitive signification of action, we shall pronounce the Spanish secular plays to be the most dramatic of all compositions. Their writers do not attempt to awaken interest by tracing the growth of some overpowering passion in a single breast, to which all the conduct of the piece is made subordinate, as in *Macbeth* or *Othello*, but by crowding the attention of the spectator with the most rapid succession of effective incidents. Their plays are acted romances, and we listen to them, as children read novels, mainly for the story. Events follow each other with the most breathless rapidity, the plot is entangled with all sorts of misunderstandings and cross purposes, and darkened with disguises and masqueradings, the rules of probability are set at defiance, geography and chronology are wholly ignored, and the catastrophe is often huddled up in the most inartificial manner, as if the author were weary of his work, and summoned his characters before him in order to despatch them by death or marriage, as the case may be. Thus the Spanish stage hardly presents a single marked, consistent, and individual character, in itself a high effort of creative genius, like *Hamlet* or *Lear*. Indeed, the same characters are constantly reproduced. We have the lover and the fair object of his passion, watched by a father or brother with jealous care, an envious and scheming rival, and generally an underplot, in which the main action is burlesqued by valets and waiting-maids, or other persons of inferior position.

For the morality of the Spanish stage, in either of its departments, not much can be said. In the sacred dramas we are often shocked by the incongruous and repulsive union of religious sensibility with the most abandoned life. Religious faith and good morals seem to have no necessary connection with each other. But this is never felt to be an inconsistency, at least not to any great degree, in Spain or Italy, where the imagination of the people personifies the powers of good and of evil, and conceives them as always contending for the souls of men; and it is a very common thing to find persons leading the most hardened lives, — robbers and murderers, — and yet regular in the performance of certain devotional forms, and firmly believing in their efficacy.

Nor is it any better in the secular dramas. We find ourselves among a set of men and women as little governed by moral motives as in the comedies of Wycherley and Congreve, and standing quite as much in need of Charles Lamb's ingenious defence. The relations of the sexes are controlled by a fantastic and sensitive jealousy, hardly short of insanity. Mere imprudence or misfortune on the part of a wife is supposed to leave a stain upon the honor of the husband, which only blood can wash out. And yet we find in this same drama disguised ladies engaged in no very reputable intrigues, claiming and receiving the protection and coöperation of gentlemen, who would not hesitate to put to death with their own hands a wife or a sister whom they detected playing the same pranks. Above all, the Spanish plays seem dictated by the very genius of homicide. Murders, duels, and assassinations occur in them with a frequency revolting to humanity and shocking to good taste. Human life is a mere weed, to be thrown away upon the slightest provocation. Indeed, so atrocious are some of their plays, that it would seem as if the authors wished to give to the audience a species of excitement as near akin as possible to that awakened by a bull-fight, and thus strewed the stage with dead bodies to gratify a taste already familiar with blood.

These general remarks upon the Spanish drama apply alike to the plays of Lope de Vega and of Calderon. To weigh the comparative merits of these great writers is a task for which we are not qualified, and which we shall not attempt. But the praise of mere distinct originality must, we think, be accorded to Lope de Vega, for he would have done all he did had Calderon never lived, but Calderon was under great intellectual obligations to Lope de Vega. If Calderon did surpass him in the race, we must remember how much of the way he was carried on Lope de Vega's shoulders. The Germans, with their usual confidence of tone, and especially the two Schlegels, have lavished the most extravagant praises upon Calderon, and given him a higher seat upon Parnassus than his rival; but we believe this judgment is not confirmed by the Spaniards themselves, and we doubt whether it would be by a taste formed upon English models. Of the purely imaginative faculty, which soars out of

sight of the common earth, and brings before us ideal worlds, like those of the "Tempest," and the "Midsummer Night's Dream," peopling them with lovelier forms than the waking eye has seen, and bathing them in splendors beyond the light of day, Calderon doubtless had more. He was also a greater master in the expression of a certain fervid and rapturous mysticism, which absorbs all the faculties of the soul, and pours round the martyr's path the "sapphire blaze" of the heaven of heavens.

Frederic Schlegel, writing from a strong Catholic zeal, says that "Calderon is, of all dramatic poets, the most Christian, and for that very reason the most romantic," a very questionable *sequitur*, by the by. But what Schlegel would call Christianity, most Protestants would call mysticism, or fanaticism, no more like Christianity than chloroform or nitrous oxide is like air. Indeed, he leaves us an inevitable inference as to his meaning, by speaking of the "remarkable excellence" of "The Firm-hearted Prince," and "The Devotion to the Cross," as illustrating the Christian idea of spiritual purification by external sorrows. Now "The Firm-hearted Prince," *El Príncipe Constante*, is one of the noblest works of human genius, and worthy of most unqualified praise, but "The Devotion to the Cross" is "founded," we quote from Mr. Ticknor, "on the adventures of a man who, though his life is a tissue of gross and atrocious crimes, is yet made an object of the especial favor of God, because he shows a uniform external reverence for whatever has the form of a cross; and who, dying in a ruffian brawl as a robber, is yet, in consequence of this devotion to the cross, miraculously restored to life, that he may confess his sins, be absolved, and then be transported directly to heaven." What shall we say of a critic who praises so outrageous a production, and ranks it side by side with that noble effusion of generous self-devotion and heroic faith, "The Firm-hearted Prince"? On the other hand, the judicious Sismondi says of Calderon, that "no one ever so far disfigured Christianity; no one ever assigned to it passions so ferocious or morals so corrupt"; and he cites this very play in support of his severe judgment. F. Schlegel also says that it would be difficult to find two men more entirely and radically dissimilar, both

in mind and in act, than Calderon and Lope de Vega ; a remark which we quote only in illustration of the cool way the Germans have of making the most questionable or paradoxical statements, as if they were self-evident propositions, which nobody ever did or ever could question.

As was naturally to be expected, the splendid success of Lope de Vega and Calderon gave birth to a school of dramatic writers, who wrote in the forms and with the spirit of their great prototypes. Among these may be mentioned Guillen de Castro, from whom Corneille took the plot of his brilliant tragedy, "The Cid"; Tirso de Molina, who first exhibited in a distinct dramatic form the character of Don Juan, now so well known on every stage in Europe; Augustin Moreto, who, according to Bouterwek, possessed a higher degree of comic talent than Calderon; and Antonio de Solís, better known by his *History of the Conquest of Mexico*.

Contemporary with Lope de Vega and Cervantes was Quevedo, a man of genius and learning, and, like so many of the authors of Spain, engaged for many years in active life as a statesman and diplomatist. He wrote both in verse and in prose; in the latter, upon a great variety of subjects, including politics, theology, and metaphysics; but his fame principally rests upon his satirical works, which are full of spirit, boldness, and originality.

For a century, during the reigns of Philip the Second, Philip the Third, and Philip the Fourth, the press in Spain teemed with heroic and narrative poems, most of which are little better than chronicles in rhyme, and only one of which has attained a European reputation. We refer to the *Araucana* of Alonso de Ercilla, the only epic poet who has recorded in verse the achievements in which he himself took part, for the subject of the poem is the war of the Spaniards against the Araucans, a brave people, of South America, in which the author served as an officer. He conceived the idea of his work, and began the execution of it, in the midst of the toils and dangers of the campaign, and often recorded at night the impressions of the day, sometimes upon scraps of paper, and sometimes upon pieces of parchment or skin, which he found in the cabins of the savages. These circumstances give a peculiar interest to the poem, and form one of the elements of its

celebrity. The style is pure, the descriptions spirited, and the speeches excellent; but its merits are rather historical than epic, and, as Sismondi says, "it is sometimes merely a rhymed gazette."

In lyric poetry at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century we find a brilliant list of writers; among them, the two brothers Argensola, who wrote with taste and correctness in the spirit of Horace, Villegas, who inherited the airy genius of Anacreon, and Herrera, whose ode on the battle of Lepanto is one of the grandest strains of patriotism and devotion in all modern literature, and glows with all that exulting fervor under which the harp of Judah burns and trembles when it celebrates the triumphs of the Most High. To the lyric poets also belongs Góngora, who is more remembered for his bad taste than for the genius which made it so contagious a disease. He introduced into Spanish literature a fantastic and affected style of writing, — not unlike that of the Euphuism of his contemporary, Lyly, in England, now known to all the world in the delectable discourses of Sir Piercie Shafton, — and became the founder of a school which lasted for a considerable period, and whose influence even Lope de Vega and Calderon did not entirely escape.

In the several departments of satirical, didactic, and descriptive poetry, no considerable name occurs. The nature of the political and ecclesiastical government of Spain gave no encouragement to that freedom of thought essential to excellence in the first two we have named; and a strong sensibility to natural beauty has never been a trait in the Spanish character, in spite of the romantic contrasts of the scenery of their own country, and the grandeur and sublimity which their conquests in America unfolded before their eyes.

Romantic fiction was cultivated with spirit and success in more than one department. Pastoral romance was introduced into Spain by Montemayor, a native of Portugal, whose "*Diana Enamorada*," published in 1542, in good Castilian, immediately attained great popularity, and led to many imitations, to which the climate and rural habits of Spain gave a nearer approach to probability than those of more northern regions. In 1599, Mateo Aleman published the first, and in 1605 the second

part of his "Guzman de Alfarache," a novel in the *gusto picaresco* style, written with great acuteness, knowledge of life, and comic power. It was received with universal favor, translated into all the languages of Europe, and has not yet lost its original popularity. In "The Civil Wars of Granada," by Gines Perez de Hita, published at about the beginning of the seventeenth century, we have the earliest specimen of the historical romance, pronounced by Mr. Ticknor to be "one of the most attractive books in the prose literature of Spain; a book written in a pure, rich, and picturesque style, which seems in some respects to be in advance of the age, and in all to be worthy of the best models of the best period." Short stories or tales were also produced in great numbers in Spain during the latter part of the sixteenth century and the whole of the seventeenth, and the names and merits of their writers are recorded by Mr. Ticknor with careful accuracy, in a chapter full of curious and minute research.

Of forensic and deliberative eloquence, there is literally nothing in the literature of Spain. The political and ecclesiastical institutions of the country were unfavorable to its growth. A plant which can only live in the air of freedom soon languishes and dies upon the soil of Spain. A religion, also, like that of Spain, which appealed so much to the senses and wielded so formidable a power, could dispense with persuasive exhortations addressed to the conscience and the understanding, and thus we find in Spanish literature no distinguished models of pulpit eloquence. In that graceful department of literature, which Cowper, Walpole, and Madame de Sévigné have made so attractive, Spain has almost nothing to show, except the remarkable letters of Antonio Perez, the secretary and for some time the favorite minister of Philip the Second, of whose checkered career a brief and interesting sketch is given by Mr. Ticknor. Didactic prose, also, never took vigorous root in the Peninsula, for that requires a freedom in the expression of opinion never granted to writers in Spain, and he who wrote with the spectre of the Inquisition at his elbow was not likely to put that heartiness and earnestness into his page, without which that class of compositions is like salt that has lost its savor.

In history, the great names during this period are those of Mariana and Solís, neither of whom in European estimation stands on a level with the great historians of England and France. Mariana was a Jesuit, but a man whose independent spirit sometimes made him obnoxious to his own Order. His History of Spain, which he wrote first in Latin and afterwards in Spanish, was the labor of thirty or forty years of his life, and from the commendation which Mr. Ticknor bestows upon it, we judge that its literary reputation is not so high as it deserves to be. Solís, who wrote plays and lyrical poems in his youth, became an ecclesiastic in mature life, and devoted himself to the composition of an historical work on the Conquest of Mexico, of which the style is the chief merit. Robertson says of him, "I know of no author in any language whose literary fame has risen so far beyond his real merit," — a remark which Southey somewhere states is equally true of Robertson himself.

The third period into which Mr. Ticknor divides his History comprises the literature that existed in Spain between the accession of the Bourbon family and the invasion of Bonaparte; or from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the early part of the nineteenth.

The eighteenth century rose upon Spain in clouds and darkness. Charles the Second, who died on the first day of November, 1700, by a secret political testament made shortly before his death, declared the Duke of Anjou, second son of the Dauphin, and grandson of Louis the Fourteenth of France, to be sole heir to his throne and dominions. This led to the well-known War of the Succession, which, with varying fortune, raged for thirteen years upon the soil of Spain, and proved, as all wars in that country have done, the truth of the saying, that no country is so easy to overrun or so hard to conquer. The treaty of Utrecht fixed the Bourbon family upon the throne of Spain, who bought a very indifferent king by giving up Naples, Sardinia, Milan, the Netherlands, Sicily, Minorca, and (perhaps hardest of all) the rock of Gibraltar, which has never since been plucked from the paw of the British lion. Spain, stripped of so large a part of her European possessions, and weakened by the long struggle she had passed through, was not in a condition to encourage literature or literary men; and the new king,

Philip the Fifth, a Frenchman by birth, and educated at the court of his grandfather, was naturally prepossessed in favor of the literature of his own country, always so unlike that of Spain. The great literary project of his reign was the formation of a Spanish Academy, which accordingly went into operation in November, 1714, and has continued ever since, being especially charged with "the cultivation and establishment of the purity of the Castilian language." The fruits of its labors have been a good Dictionary and an indifferent Grammar. It has also published careful editions of different works of recognized authority, particularly a magnificent one of *Don Quixote*. It has also offered prizes for poetical compositions, and occasionally printed meritorious works. The Academy has been, on the whole, a truly respectable institution, and though such a body can never create original genius or find it where it does not exist, it has never attempted to shape and mould the national taste, and has no such stain upon its records as the attack by the French Academy upon the *Cid* of Corneille.

That the iron bigotry of the Church and the Inquisition suffered no relaxation may be learned from the appalling fact, that during the reign of Philip the Fifth no less than a thousand persons were burned alive for heretical or heterodox opinions, and that at least twelve times that number were in various ways subjected to public punishments and disgrace.

But during the darkness of this period, the light of literature was not entirely extinguished. The name of Benito Feyjóo would have been an honorable one in the literary annals of any country, at any time. He was a Benedictine monk, who in 1717 established himself in a convent near Oviedo, and lived there for forty-seven years, engaged in the assiduous cultivation of letters and the tranquil pursuit of knowledge. He was not a man of original genius, but one of that class of minds, not less important, who are admirably fitted to be the conductors and interpreters of genius. He was a man of various and exact learning, and what was better, of strong good sense and penetrating acuteness. He had a happy gift, like that of Franklin, of writing upon scientific subjects with precision, and at the same time in a popular style, and could also touch social follies with the delicate

lash of Addison. From his monastic post of observation, he saw clearly the darkness which rested upon the minds of his countrymen, and with equal sagacity discerned the means by which it might best be removed; and to this object he devoted himself with great singleness of purpose, urged more by considerations of the good he was to do, than of the fame he was to earn. In his numerous writings, which were mostly in the form of essays and dissertations, he endeavoured to make his countrymen acquainted with the scientific discoveries of England and France. He had imbibed the spirit of the Baconian philosophy, and learned from Bayle a wise historical skepticism. He told the reading public of Spain, that the Trojan war did not rest upon the same ground of evidence as the civil contest between Cæsar and Pompey; that Dædalus was not a real personage, like Demosthenes; that the sacred oil of Rheims was not brought down from heaven by a dove; that no mortal man had ever seen Prester John or the Wandering Jew; and that Luther, monster as he was, was not born of a devil. He laughed at astrology, alchemy, magic, and all forms of popular delusion. Upon the rights of women he wrote in a noble and generous spirit, in advance alike of his profession and his age, and had his countrywomen erected a statue in his honor, it would have been a more becoming and appropriate offering than the naked athlete set up in Hyde Park by the women of England, as a tribute to the Duke of Wellington, and called by the name of Achilles, leaving the world to wonder alike what there was in the statue to suggest Achilles, or what there was in Achilles to suggest the Duke of Wellington.

With all this, Feyjoo was a good Catholic, and if not countenanced by the Church, (indeed he was more than once summoned before the Inquisition,) he was never actually silenced by it. His influence was thus impaired by no qualifying circumstances, and became very great. His writings hit the general mind between wind and water, and at his death, which took place in 1764, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had given a powerful impulse to the intellect of his country, and in the right direction. Strange to say, the name of this excellent writer and estimable man is not mentioned either by Bouterwek or Sismondi.

The accession of a French dynasty to the throne of Spain naturally drew the two countries into closer relations than had before been known, and in 1737 a distinct effort was made to introduce into Spain a poetical system founded on the critical doctrines prevalent in France, by the publication of Luzan's "Art of Poetry," an elaborate work of more than five hundred folio pages. Luzan had been well educated in the learning of the times, and spoke and wrote both French and Italian with ease and elegance. His work is an excellent summary of the French school of criticism, written with sound judgment and from the stores of a full mind. His general view of poetry is essentially narrow, for he regards it as subsidiary to some other end, and does not recognize in the grand and beautiful creations of genius a law and purpose of their own. He is thus generally right in pointing out the literary faults of his countrymen, their affectation, their extravagance, and their bad taste; but his critical system made him do imperfect justice to their peculiar excellences, especially in the drama. Thus he blames the Spanish dramatists for violating the unities of Aristotle, which is just as reasonable as it would be to find fault with a rose for not being a lily.

In the reign of Ferdinand the Sixth, which lasted thirteen years and ended in 1759, some signs of improvement in the state of Spain began to be visible. The power of advancing intelligence over the Inquisition was shown in the fact, that only ten persons were burnt alive during this reign, and these were relapsed Jews. The general policy of the government was peaceful and salutary. Velazquez, in 1754, published a work on the history of Spanish poetry, of which Mr. Ticknor says, that "it is a slight work, confused in its arrangement, and too short to develop the subject satisfactorily; but it is written in a good style, and occasionally shows acuteness in its criticism of individual authors."

Charles the Third, who ascended the throne in 1759, was a man of energy and good sense, and in general material prosperity, Spain made much progress under his government. But, occupied as he was in the cares of government, correcting abuses and restoring ruins, he could spare but little time or thought for letters or men of letters, and a sovereign, though he may encourage ge-

nus when it appears, cannot call it into existence. So long a blight had hung over the human mind in Spain, that a period of more than one generation was requisite to restore it to its natural productiveness. Indeed, it had long been settled in the opinion of all impartial observers, that the existence of the Inquisition was quite incompatible with a vigorous and original literature. Still, there was the evidence of literary vitality, and the scholar and the patriot had alike reason to look forward to the future with hopeful anticipations.

In 1758 was published, without the sanction of its author, Padre Isla, the first volume of "The History of the Famous Preacher, Friar Gerund," a remarkable work, and, in point of original genius, superior to any thing produced in Spain during the eighteenth century. It is a satirical novel, directed against the coarse and irreverent style of preaching then prevalent in Spain, written in a style which Cervantes and Quevedo had made so popular, combining sound sense and penetrating wisdom with rich humor, good-natured satire, overflowing animal spirits, and quaint caricature. Its author is a decent and presentable Rabelais. A book so full of wit, and showing such knowledge of the national character, met with great success, and has always enjoyed a popularity second only to that of Don Quixote. No higher compliment could be paid to it, than the horrible outcry which it awakened among the rabble-rout of preaching friars, — that flock of unclean birds, — against whom it was aimed. The wolves of the Inquisition would gladly have fleshed their fangs in the blood of the champion who had dealt them so staggering a blow, but, thanks to the favor of the king and the people and to the advancing intelligence of the age, they could only wreak their vengeance upon the book, — which they suppressed as far as they could, — and the author was personally unharmed.

Padre Isla is also well known in literary history as the translator of "Gil Blas" into Spanish, claiming the work as stolen from that language, and further vindicating his country's pretensions by writing a long and not very happy continuation. This curious discussion has been revived within the present century, and the Spanish claim maintained with great earnestness by Llorente,

the well-known historian of the Inquisition, but we believe it has made no converts beyond the Pyrenees.

The efforts of men of letters, during the reign of Charles the Third, flowed in two directions; one class supporting the old national literature, and the other inclining to that of France. In the latter class was found a larger proportion of men of ability, such as the elder Moratin, a poet and a dramatist; Cadahalso, a poet and an essayist, author of a well-known work, "The Moorish Letters," of the class of "The Citizen of the World," and written with taste and good sense; and Yriarte and Samaniego, both popular and successful writers of fables.

In the drama, the same contest prevailed, and the two schools struggled for victory upon the stage; as a general rule, one favored by the cultivated classes, and the other vociferously upheld by the multitude. Among those who attempted to introduce and naturalize the more regular forms of the French theatre were Montiano, Moratin the elder, Cadahalso, Jovellanos, and Moratin the younger, the latter a man of genuine dramatic talent, who, under favorable circumstances and in peaceful times, might have done much for the stage. Of the national school, the most successful writer was Ramon de la Cruz, who produced a great number of what we should call farces, founded on the manners of the middling and lower classes, but never rising into the higher region of poetical invention.

In such a state of the literary world in Spain, it is not surprising that minds of an eclectic cast should have arisen, and made an attempt to combine excellences not absolutely irreconcilable. Such, in point of fact, was the case, and the proper founder of this school was Melendez Valdes, who was born in Estremadura, in 1754, a man of fine genius, whose sad and instructive biography is briefly and happily sketched by Mr. Ticknor. Tempted by the opportunities opened to him through literary success, he left his happy and tranquil retreat at Salamanca, where he was a professor, and embarked upon the stormy ocean of public life, from which came a transient gleam of distinction and prosperity, but in the end, ruin, poverty, exile, and death; thus illustrating most forcibly the beautiful words of Landor, — "How many, who have

abandoned for public life the studies of philosophy and poetry, may be compared to brooks and rivers, which in the beginning of their course have assuaged our thirst, and have invited us to tranquillity by their bright resemblance of it, and which afterwards partake the nature of that vast body whereunto they run, — its dreariness, its bitterness, its foam, its storms, its everlasting noise and commotion.”

The poetry of Melendez is chiefly lyric and pastoral, and is marked by tenderness and delicacy of feeling, a lively sense of natural beauty, fine powers of description, and graceful turns of expression ; merits which seem the more touching, and make the more impression upon us, from their contrast with the hard fate and unhappy end of the author.

Among the men of letters in Spain, whose names shed an honorable light upon the latter part of the eighteenth century, are Escoiquiz, the translator of Young’s “Night Thoughts” and Milton’s “Paradise Lost,” and author of a dull epic on the Conquest of Mexico ; Cienfuegos, a poet and a patriot ; Quintana, who still lives in a serene and honored old age ; and Moratin the younger, already mentioned as a dramatic poet, and author also of a volume of lyric and miscellaneous poetry, of much merit, and who is also to be praised as a man of virtue and honor when virtue and honor were rare things, and was rewarded, as men of such qualities were then rewarded in Spain, with poverty and exile.

Our “chronicle and brief abstract” of Mr. Ticknor’s work may be fitly closed with the name of a truly great man, Gaspar Melchior de Jovellanos, a wise magistrate, an enlightened statesman, an accomplished scholar ; one of those men whose fame, like a palm-tree in a desert, seems loftier and greener from the barren waste of public and private degeneracy around them. Living at a period when vice had ceased to pay to virtue the poor tribute of hypocrisy, — when the criminal passion of an abandoned queen, and the hardly less criminal insensibility of a besotted king, had raised a private soldier in the guards to be prime minister of Spain and the most powerful subject in Europe, — when, in a profligate court, place and preferment were venal and bought with the honor of man and the chastity of woman, Jovellanos presented in his

life and person the noble and patriotic virtues of the best ages of Spanish history. The path of such a man, at such a period, could not be always in sunshine, for his pure and elevated course was a silent reproach to the baseness around him. He was twice exiled to the mountains of the Asturias, and was for seven years confined in an unhealthy prison in the island of Majorca, exposed to privations and sufferings from which his constitution never recovered. But neither good nor adverse fortune could change the firm temper of his spirit, or abate the singleness of purpose with which he devoted himself to the interests of his country. Notwithstanding the various duties of his active career, he wrote much, on different subjects. His essays on legislation and political economy are full of wisdom, sagacity, and sound observation, and penetrated with a spirit of philosophical statesmanship long unknown in Spain. Elegant literature formed at all times the favorite amusement of this admirable person. He wrote a prose comedy, which was presented with remarkable success, a poetical tragedy, epistles in verse, satires, and burlesque ballads; all of them good enough to dispense with the protection which so great a name would have extended to even ordinary productions.

From our imperfect analysis of Mr. Ticknor's work, which resembles the original only as an index-map resembles the sheets of a voluminous atlas, the reader may form some notion of the literary rank it is entitled to claim. We should have failed of our purpose, if we had not conveyed some impression of its fulness of research, its comprehensive plan, its careful accuracy, and the good taste and sound judgment of its criticisms. We shall be surprised if the best Spanish scholars do not give it most emphatic commendation. In summing up upon its merits, we have only further to say, that it is a book richly deserving the confidence of the literary public. It is stamped with the impress of careful and conscientious preparation. There are no indications of hasty cramming, or of hurried getting up. Mr. Ticknor has had the rare virtue of literary patience, the want of which sends so many half-fledged books fluttering into print, that either fall to the ground by the mere force of gravity, or are shot on the wing by the critical sportsman. He has gone on, year after year, adding to his stores of learning,

and laying more deeply the foundations of his literary structure, and thus his work has the mellow flavor of fruit that has ripened on the bough. He had learned the extent and capacities of his subject before he began to write, and was not obliged to vary his scale of proportion as the work went on.

Nor is this History of Spanish Literature a mere chronicle of the names and works of men of letters, but it is a record of the growth and progress of the mind of Spain, as shown in its books. This, we need hardly say, is the true mode of writing literary history, and the only mode by which its vitality may be preserved. Upon any other plan, it is literary chronology, and not literary history. A mere list of names, dates, and editions is as little suggestive as a catalogue of Egyptian kings copied from the lid of a sarcophagus. In regard to the literature of Spain, we wish to know in what manner that portion of the human family which was there planted — which had its own way of building houses, composing music, painting pictures, and fashioning garments — also wrote its books; with what voice and in what words did they speak when the emotions common to all mankind took the shape of literature; what was their touch upon the “hero’s harp” and the “lover’s lute.” In this spirit Mr. Ticknor has written his history.

As to the distribution of his subject, — the space given to particular periods or individual writers, — there may be a difference of opinion. For ourselves, we should be glad to have had more about Cervantes and Don Quixote, and especially a distinct parallel between Lope de Vega and Calderon, both as to general poetical power and the purely dramatic faculty; but this is because these are familiar names. A Spaniard acquainted with all the rich and varied literature of his country, and anxious to have full justice done to the gods of the lesser as well as of the greater houses, would probably say that these writers enjoyed quite as large a space as they had any right to claim.

Another quality which we observe in this work is its general moderation of tone, and the absence of any marked personal element. It is as little subjective as such a book can well be. Mr. Ticknor has no taste for paradox, and the character of his mind makes him averse

to all extremes of opinion. Free from any partisan feeling, he abstains from taking sides on controverted points, and seeks to do justice to all men and to every form which literature has assumed. We have the impression constantly, that we are reading a conscientious book, in which the writer's views have not been warped by personal prepossessions, or by obstinate adherence to unbending theories. He is just to Racine, and no more than just to Calderon. Men of extreme opinions and enthusiastic temperament will value his volumes less than those whose cast of mind is dispassionate and judicial. Perhaps it is only making the same remark in another form, to say that it is a work without pretensions. It abstains from strong statements and positive assertions. It is free from any air of offensive dogmatism. There are no portions which will awaken a spirit of resistance, or provoke opposition. This moderateness of tone, though it may lessen its immediate popularity, cannot fail in the long run to enhance the weight of its authority, and secure it a higher place in literature.

The style of the work is not marked by any traits of decided individuality, and the reader's attention is not forcibly arrested by it as he reads. It is simple, perspicuous, and correct,—a transparent medium of thought,—doing entire justice to what is meant to be told, but not adding to its attractions by any peculiar felicity of its own. Good sense is the prevalent characteristic alike of the substance and the form of the work. Mr. Ticknor has evidently a strong aversion to fine writing. We will not quarrel with so estimable a literary trait, especially in an American writer, but in his determination to avoid those "purple patches" of rhetoric, of which we are all too fond, he sometimes comes too near the opposite extreme of dryness and coldness. We should have liked, occasionally, a more animated movement and a warmer tone of coloring, such as his excellent poetical translations show that he must have at command.

The work is throughout illustrated by copious notes, which will give a more complete comprehension of the wide range of Mr. Ticknor's reading than even the text itself; and in the Appendix will be found some very elaborate and learned discussions on points of inferior interest to the general reader.

This elaborate and every way excellent History of Spanish Literature will much increase the debt which Spain already owes to us, from the classical labors of Irving and Prescott. These are no more than becoming tributes on our part to the land which despatched Columbus on that memorable voyage, the results of which have so far exceeded the most enthusiastic dreams of the illustrious navigator. We close Mr. Ticknor's volumes with a feeling of sadness. Its last words sound like the dying strains of a solemn requiem. We feel that we are watching the going down of a great light. There is a beautiful passage in a letter of Sulpicius, the jurist, to Cicero, in which he speaks of the ruins of the once flourishing cities he had lately seen, and draws from such a spectacle a moral which rebukes the querulousness of human grief, and suggests an elevated strain of consolatory reflection.* How trivial do the reverses of a single life, the disasters that darken our little day, seem, when compared with the decay of such an empire, the fall of such a state, as that of Spain! And yet we recognize in such a retribution alike the goodness and the wisdom of God, and pity is not mingled in the emotions which it calls forth. The reader of English poetry will recall some vigorous lines by Cowper, suggested by that sublime picture in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, in which the prophet paints, with a pencil grander and more tragic than that of Æschylus, the powers of hell as moved to meet the coming of the king of Babylon, and the kings of the nations as rising up to give him their stern and awful greeting.

“ O, could their ancient Incas rise again,
How would they take up Israel's taunting strain !
Art thou too fallen, Iberia ? Do we see
The robber and the murderer weak as we ?
Thou that hast wasted earth and dared despise
Alike the wrath and mercy of the skies,
Thy pomp is in the grave, thy glory laid
Low in the pits thine avarice has made.

* “ Ex Asia rediens, cum ab Ægina Megaram versus navigarem, cœpi regiones circumcirca prospicere. Post me erat Ægina, ante Megara, dextra Piræus, sinistra Corinthus ; quæ oppida quodam tempore florentissima fuerunt, nunc prostrata et diruta ante oculos jacent. Cœpi egomet mecum sic cogitare : ‘ Hem ! nos homunculi indignamur, si quis nostrum interiit, aut occisus est, quorum vita brevior esse debet, cum uno loco tot oppidum cada-vera projecta jaceant. ’ ” — *Cic. Epis. ad Diversos*, Lib. IV. 5.